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Press Release

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Lately there have been a number of reports in various news media about a purported signing of a "cease-fire agreement" between the Indonesian provincial authorities and remnants of the so-called Fretilin in East Timor. These reports appear to have originated from Monsignor da Costa Lopez, formerly Bishop in East Timor and now residing in Lisbon. Monsignor da Costa Lopez has been known in the past to have disseminated all kinds of stories on conditions in East Timor which subsequently proved to be utterly false and contrary to the facts as established by reputable sources such as the ICRC and other international organizations and personalities.

These reports were subsequently taken up and amplified by a certain Mr. Abilio Araujo, who claims to be a spokesman for the so-called Fretilin based in Lisbon. Mr. Araujo is reported by the press as having asserted that a truce and cease-fire agreement of a far-reaching nature has been concluded between Indonesian officials in East Timor with the remnants of the so-called Fretilin.

The Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the United Nations wishes to state categorically that no such agreement has been entered into or is being contemplated by the Provincial Government with the so-called Fretilin in East Timor.

The actual facts regarding these developments are as follows:

1. Shortly after assuming his post, the new Governor of East Timor, Mr. Mario Viegas Carrascalao took the initiative again to call upon the remnants of the so-called Fretilin still holding out in the mountains of East Timor to lay down their arms and to avail themselves of the general amnesty offered by the Indonesian Government since 1977.

2. This appeal to the last remaining desperate band of stragglers to join their compatriots in the peaceful development of their province, in freedom and dignity and as part of the Indonesian Republic, received an initial positive response. A number of informal meetings took place between the Governor and his staff and representatives of the so-called Fretilin remnants in order to provide more information about conditions under which such amnesty would be granted to them.

3. It is indeed true that at the beginning the representatives of the so-called Fretilin posed a number of political demands for their peaceful return into society but these have been firmly rejected by Governor Carrascalao and it was pointed out that the same conditions would apply to them as to those who have earlier made use of the general amnesty. However, other requests of a humanitarian nature, such as requests for foods, medicine, and the services of a Catholic priest, have been fulfilled.

4. Thus, it is clear that no cease-fire or truce agreement are involved, and even less, negotiations which would imply the holding of a "referendum" or other arrangements that would set the clock back in East Timor. Since July 17, 1976, the people of East Timor have exercised their right to self-determination and have become independent through integration with the Republic of Indonesia and the decolonization of the territory has effectively taken place. It is inconceivable, therefore, and indeed ridiculous to assert that at this stage the Indonesian Government would enter into any "cease-fire agreement" (as if between two equal parties) with the so-called Fretilin remnants in East Timor, who are now reduced to only a small number of armed men engaged in robberies and other criminal activities. What is now, in essence, happening is a continuing effort by Governor Mario Viegas Carrascalao to effect a reconciliation among fellow East Timorese, specifically in the context of general amnesty, an effort to heal the wounds of conflict and to come together as one family again in the spirit of Indonesia's traditional tenets of "musyawarah and mufakat" (consultations and consensus).

5. These efforts on the part of the Provincial Government are continuing in good faith and it is to be hoped that eventually the last remaining diehards of the Fretilin would realize the futility of further resisting the overwhelming desire of the people of East Timor for peaceful and constructive reunification with their brothers in the Indonesian Republic.

6. World public opinion, therefore, should not be deceived by the spurious propaganda and disinformation now being disseminated by the handful of self-styled representatives of the so-called Fretilin in Lisbon and elsewhere, which appear to be solely designed as an attempt to exploit these recent developments in East Timor in order to advance their diminishing standing and credibility in international fora, in cynical disregard of the welfare of their own countrymen in East Timor.

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